

**Date:** March 11, 2009

**To:** Senate Education Committee

**From:** Kurt J. Dyer  
Box 228  
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(406) 753-2354

**Re:** House Bill No. 488

Mr. Chairman and Senate Education Members:

My name is Kurt Dyer; I am unable to attend this committee hearing in person due to an eye surgery. I am from Brady and currently sit on the Dutton/Brady School Board. I have been a local trustee for the past 28 years; I am a past director of eight years on the Montana School Board of Directors and past president of the Montana School Board Association. I am here today to give testimony in favor of House Bill No. 488 as a private land owner, taxpayer and voter.

It's my belief that enrollment in our schools will continue to decline in our rural agriculture based communities in Montana for the next decade or more. If the people in these communities are to be encouraged to consider consolidation of school districts as one solution to declining enrollment to preserve a quality educational opportunity for their kids, then fair treatment by Montana laws has to be a part of that process.

In recent consolidations, the action was taken according to Montana codes at the time of consolidation then shortly after the laws were changed revoking the rights of voters and taxpayers "after the fact" particularly in the appeal process to transfer land from one district to another. This had a very negative impact on the voters and taxpayers attitude toward the consolidation. It has also been recognized as one of the stumbling blocks that districts considering consolidations in the future are identifying as a problem to consolidation efforts. Changing the rules after an action has taken place has never been an acceptable practice in government or law and it certainly does nothing to help promote change in communities for the future.

We must earn the trust of fellow property owners, taxpayers and voters. The civic minded people of these communities that sit on our local school boards and county commission offices need to have the proper tools in place to effectively manage the issues that come before them. School district land transfers have always been a difficult issue to handle, let us not make it more difficult to do what is right for our kids. Education is the most important gift we can give our younger generation in this time of global considerations.

Kurt J. Dyer

